

Student Abstract

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Title: Emergency Powers, Public Health Threats, and Priority Setting: 2003 Case Study of SARS in Canada

Abstract: The 2003 Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS) outbreak in Canada challenged the nation's preparedness to public health emergencies. Since then, Canada has implemented numerous economic, political, legal, and social reform strategies to ensure that the 2003 experience will not be repeated. The outbreak highlighted the gaps within the nation's *modus operandi* of outbreak response. This consists of a set of legal, political, social, and economic tools; all of which may not overlap nor be consistent with the other on a daily basis, let alone in the midst of an outbreak. As a result, our analysis examines the interface between ethics (priority setting), public health emergency management (outbreak response), and the law (declaration of emergency). Many questions remain unanswered as to the optimal means to set priorities in an outbreak; a closer analysis of the role of the law (i.e., emergency powers) may reveal lethal gaps that may remain in a nation's ability to come to fair and speedy decisions as well as distributing essential human, material, and financial resources in an efficient manner. Comparisons of various emergency powers will be conducted between Canada and the United States. Moreover, the overlap between each nation's emergency powers at the border will be examined. Currently the leading theory of priority setting is Daniels' and Sabin's (1997) "Accountability for Reasonableness," a proposed framework for ensuring ethically-guided decisions. The purpose of this study is to test this framework's applicability in an emergent circumstance and its applicability or discordance with the law in an emergency.